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Initial Latin American Thoughts on the Second Antidrug Summit [redacted]

Summary

The six Latin American governments participating in the coming antidrug summit--Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Mexico--are just beginning to focus on potential agenda items. Initial reporting indicates, however, that the five Andean presidents intend to use the meeting to press Washington for greater economic--especially trade--benefits. All the Latin presidents probably will support some multilateral antidrug initiatives, partly to deflect domestic criticism that Washington unduly influences their countries' counternarcotics efforts. To boost their standing at home, most of the participants will seek multilateral recognition for their antidrug efforts and will try to avoid embarrassing or politically sensitive topics such as official corruption, interdiction and eradication performance, and the role of local militaries in the war on drugs. The Andean leaders reportedly will consult on their presummit positions in January; [redacted]

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Colombia President Gaviria appears likely to support expanded regional antidrug enforcement operations, while pressing the United States for trade concessions he views as essential to maintaining public support for the antidrug war. Colombia's pointman for the summit, Gabriel Silva, suggested [redacted] on Tuesday that the summit be postponed until mid-March to allow time for at least two multilateral working-group sessions. Silva says that, before the summit, Bogota hopes to conclude with Washington a bilateral assets-sharing agreement and a tax-information-exchange treaty, the latter to help combat money laundering. At the summit, Bogota reportedly will endorse a regional antinarcotics training center to standardize operational capabilities, a multilateral information exchange mechanism, and judicial cooperation agreements. In addition, Bogota will encourage more regional interdiction efforts, like Support Justice III, but will insist that the United States provide resources, [redacted] at least equal to what it has supplied for the current operations. [redacted]

Nevertheless, Gaviria's agenda for the summit probably will include contentious bilateral trade issues--including intellectual property rights and import restrictions for cut flowers, textiles, and coffee, [redacted] He reportedly will seek US concessions to allay growing domestic criticism of the government for "prematurely" lowering trade barriers. Gaviria is especially concerned about a US call for negotiations on Colombian textile imports--which, he says, violates the spirit of bilateral antidrug agreements--and intends to raise the issue with President Bush, [redacted].

Bolivia A variety of reporting suggests that President Paz Zamora expects the summit to provide international recognition of his government's progress in fighting drugs. He probably hopes that multilateral counternarcotics accords will help deflect domestic criticism that Washington dominates Bolivia's antidrug program. Nevertheless, [redacted] reports indicate that Paz Zamora will press the United States for additional economic aid, including balance-of-payments support. La Paz may reiterate its claim that such assistance is vital to expand alternative development efforts, the heart of Bolivia's voluntary compensated coca-eradication program. Paz Zamora may also seek to deemphasize the need for a military role in the drug war in the hope of forestalling conflicts with his congress over US military trainers already in-country. [redacted]

Peru The Fujimori administration, which is engaged in a struggle with the legislature over sweeping economic reform and pacification decrees, has yet to focus on the summit. Like the other regional participants, however, President Fujimori seems likely to seek greater economic and trade benefits from Washington--which his advisers say are vital to the crop substitution plans that anchor his antidrug strategy. As he reportedly has done before, Fujimori may

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consult with Bolivia's Paz Zamora on strategies for dealing with Washington on antidrug issues. His recent public statements suggest that Fujimori may press other summit participants to acknowledge that coca growers are victims of the narcotics trade and that alternative development and economic growth--not interdiction and eradication--offer the best hope of reducing the coca supply. [redacted]

Ecuador Lameduck President Borja [redacted] is expected to stress his government's success in keeping Ecuador free of coca cultivation and, in accord with his own policies, may endorse an enhanced antidrug role for armed forces throughout the region. [redacted] He almost certainly will support any Andean resolution favoring economic growth and coca-replacement programs as the best antidotes to the lucrative drug industry. [redacted]

Venezuela President Perez, like most of his regional counterparts, has been preoccupied with recent regional summits. In addition, recent reporting indicates that Interior Minister Izaguirre, who heads Venezuela's antidrug "Unified Command," intends to resign by the end of this year. Nonetheless, the Venezuelan Government--with which the Embassy hopes to conclude a precursor chemical and a radar deployment agreement prior to the summit--almost certainly will join its neighbors in criticizing what they see as increasing US trade protectionism. [redacted]

Mexico Although Mexican officials have indicated that President Salinas will attend the summit, Mexico City has yet to formally accept President Bush's invitation; we have seen little evidence that the Mexicans have focused on agenda items. Like other Latin participants, however, Salinas is likely to stress the strides his administration has made against drug trafficking, including the seizure of about 125 metric tons of cocaine over the last three years. [redacted] He probably will point out that much of Mexico's trafficking activity stems from drug production in the Andean countries, necessitating closer cooperation with them. [redacted]

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